

March 19, 2019

To: Senate Committee on Education,
From: Lizbeht Marquez Gutierrez
RE: Senate Bill 859

Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Thomsen, and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Lizbeht Marquez, I am student at Western Oregon University and I am a Policy Associate for the Oregon Student Association. I am here to urge your support of SB 859 to expand tuition equity to include graduate students.

Over the past few years, the Oregon legislature has passed critical legislation that has allowed undocumented students to pursue higher education. Although this has been a step forward, there are still many barriers undocumented students face while trying to achieve their career goals. One of the biggest barriers undocumented students face is lack of financial resources to fund their education. Undocumented students cannot apply for grants, work-study, and loans to help alleviate the costs. Students then have to pay out of pocket for their education which burdens them and their families. The cost of graduate school is much more expensive than undergraduate school and is even more expensive if the student pays the nonresident tuition.

Some undocumented students at my campus have shared with me that they wouldn't be in college if they had to pay nonresident tuition. Some of these students want to further their education and plan to attend graduate school and I believe that they can. They are committed to pursue their dreams and I want them to have the opportunity to succeed. I believe that expanding tuition equity to include undergraduate students will break down another barrier that undocumented students face. Undocumented students are also Oregonians, they have been a part this state and have gone through the same schools as every other Oregonian, so they also deserve the opportunity to pursue their dreams. The legislature can ensure this by enacting SB 859 which would allow graduate students who qualify for tuition equity to have an accessible and affordable education.

This bill would maximize the outcomes of Oregon's education investments by helping more Oregon students afford and complete graduate school which will help lead to stable and fruitful careers. Clarifying that TE applies to graduate school would remove an arbitrary educational limit that exists for undocumented students.

This is why I support SB 859 and encourage this committee to pass it. As legislators you have the ability to make sure that all Oregonians are granted equal access to opportunities that will benefit people individually and the state. This bill would will help strengthen tomorrow's workforce because when all Oregon students can continue through graduate school and get more advanced degrees, Oregon wins. Thank you for your time and commitment to serve.

Sincerely,
Lizbeht Marquez
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